On Good, Evil and Behaviourism

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On Good, Evil and Behaviourism

by Marwana

Summary

Will Graham : You can't reduce me to... a set of influences. I'm not the product of anything. I've given up good and evil... for behaviourism.

What happens when you release behaviourism (and Hannibal Lecter) on the School for Good and Evil, where actions are very clearcut Good or Evil?

Notes

Silly story I wrote when I finished the first book of School for Good and Evil. I almost immediately had to think of the quote I added in the summary and how Hannibal and Will would have dealt with Good and Evil if it had been part of 'their story'. Based on the tv series of Hannibal, not necessarily the books.

See the end of the work for more notes

Will Graham : You can't reduce me to... a set of influences. I'm not the product of anything. I've given up good and evil... for behaviourism.

oOo

It was at the end of pretty normal week, in one of their shared classes of Surviving Fairy Tales that Evers and Nevers finally saw eye to eye on *something*.
Normally Yuba the Gnome gave the course inside the Forest, but for some reason – Sophie and her weird behaviour, definitely Sophie and her weird behaviour – Yuba was absent and the Forest was out of bounds for the time being.

The Gnome had temporarily been replaced by two teachers who made it very clear that they were not to be separated: one from Good and one from Evil. Or at least, that was what they had been told. In reality, the teachers in front of them were not as clearcut Good or Evil as the other teachers – or even most of the students – were. Both were handsome in their own way, and both had a strong presence, but neither felt clearly as a Never or an Ever.

They had seen them before of course though they hadn't had the *honour* of having them as a teacher. And even when they were seen, it was mainly on the bridge walking from Good to Evil, or the other way around and not actually in Good or in Evil. Sometimes, they walked hand in hand. Sometimes one seemed to be trailing after the incensed other as if they had had a spat. Sometimes one could be seen being followed around by an incredibly creepy, black, leathery creature the size of a human being with antlers on its head. Sometimes, the other was seen being trailed by a dark ram with incredibly sharp, reddish, wicked looking horns. They were never seen alone.

It was said by those who had had family passing through the school before them that they normally provided a course in the third and fourth years to those who were in the top of their class on how to recognize Good and Evil when it tried to hide itself.

And now here they were: a bunch of first years getting a lecture normally reserved for the best of the best of the higher years by two teachers who were not clearcut Good or Evil. It confused both sides immensely.

The one that they would have normally fit into 'Ever' was dressed neatly in a sharp, navy three-piece suit with a windowpane pattern. It wasn't a style they had ever seen before. It was too dark and too… *different* to be Ever style, but too colourful to be a Never style.
His kerchief and tie were a flashy oxblood red and his shoes a shined black. His greying blondish hair was parted neatly. His eyes tended to change from a bright amber, to a colour that was best described as 'red' depending on both his own mood, the mood of his partner or something else they could not guess at. He had sharp features that could not be described as delicate, nor could it be described as severe. At best, he had something mink like, in a handsome way. He was polite to a fault and smiled easily, his teeth crooked in a charming way. His accent was… *interesting* and he was clearly cultured. He had introduced himself as Count Hannibal Lecter the eight, but preferred to go by 'doctor'. Something about having had to earn one title, and not the other. Frankly, it had made their confusion even worse. Who would willingly give up a title as 'count'?

The other one would therefore have had to be the ‘Never’ one, but he didn’t really fit that title. Not truly. He was too human for it, too gruffly pretty.
He was only slightly shorter than his companion and more rugged. He was also more surely, more rough around the edges and he didn’t really smile. He had blueish eyes that seemed to change between grey and sky-blue depending on his mood, dark brown fly-away curls that hid a scar on his forehead and a short-cropped beard that hid a rather nasty scar on his cheek. He was dressed in clothes more suitable for a huntsman or a woodsman. He was clearly smart and just as clearly not a follower, which made his choice of clothing strange and confusing to them. He had introduced himself as Will Graham. Just Will Graham. His partner had stated that he should be referred to as the Count of the two of them. In his own words ‘he had earned it’.

Both didn’t seem to be armed, but they seemed somewhat dangerous in a way they couldn’t really describe.

When asked what their lecture was actually about, they had stated that they would provide another view on what to look out for with regards to Good and Evil, and that looks and actions could be deceiving.

That had puzzled most of the students present and shot them right from confused into utterly bewildered, though Sophie had gotten some very pointed looks.

“Can anyone tell me the main difference between ‘Good’ behaviour,” the doctor had started, “and ‘Bad’ behaviour?”

“The Good defend, forgive, help, give and love,” Beatrix stated as she flipped her blonde hair over her shoulder. Everyone knew at least that much, “and the evil attack, punish, hurt, take and hate.”
The Evers sent blinding smiled towards the Nevers at their jeers. They were finally on familiar ground, and that reaction was expected of them.

“Very good,” Lecter continued, “But what if someone were loving, quick to help, very giving and prone to defending others at the cost of their own life but not very forgiving, what would happen to that person?”

The students shared glances, though only within their own group of Evers and Nevers, as they fell right back into bewilderment.

“Let us turn it around,” Graham said gruffly, “you have someone who clearly hurts someone else, he takes from them, punishes certain behaviour and attacks others verbally in a very subtle way. But that person loves another very strongly however and is willing to sacrifice everything for their beloved. Is that person Evil?”

The students shared glances again. That was far more clearcut than the first example had been.
“Yes,” came the answer from most directions, though some just nodded.

“What’s the main difference between the two?” the count asked them.
“Their behaviour?” Tedros stated hesitantly, “the first acts mostly Good and the second acts

mostly Evil."

"Acts," Lecter repeated slowly, "that makes it sound like someone whose soul is inherently Evil, could become Good as long as they *act* within the boundaries of what the rules describe as Good."
The students looked flabbergasted at him.

"In that case, how did Sophie end up as a Never?" Agatha asked sceptically, "and I as an Ever?"
Both teachers gave her a faint, somewhat mysterious smile.
"You would have to ask her," Graham stated, "and look at your own behaviour for that."

"With regards to behaviour and surviving Fairy Tales," Lecter continued as if no questions had been asked, "consider this: how can you recognize someone Evil if they don't look the part and act Good, or the other way around? To give an example, remember that Snow White took the poisoned apple voluntarily."

"So it is about the motive of the other?" Hester said dubiously.
"Exactly," Lecter told her with a small smile, "a kind looking old woman can hand you a beautiful apple for free with the worst intentions behind that action, or a hideous frog could ask for a kiss with the best intentions behind his wish. The first one might look Good, the second one might look Evil."

"Try it out," the possible woodsman turned count told them, "within your group, try to come up with three examples of both and how to recognize them."

They quickly figured out that it was harder as they had made it sound.

oOo

It was nearly at the end of the surprisingly tricky lesson that someone – Sophie, of course it was Sophie – finally asked, "Who of you is Good, and who is Evil?"

The two teachers shared a fond, secretive smile.

"That question is always asked," Graham stated dryly, "based on our lesson, what do you believe?"
"You are both Good?" Hester sounded somewhat hesitantly sceptical.
"Why do you believe that?" Lecter asked her, "what gave it away in your eyes?"
"Well, you aren't cruel," she started, clearly comparing them to their other teachers, "and what you say seems biased towards Good."
The count masquerading as huntsman snorted.

"We are neither one nor the other," the doctor stated with a fond smile at his companion, "our story was a draw, and we switched roles multiple times."

That led to confused murmuring, though it wasn't as bad as at the start. Most of them had gotten somewhat used to the *strangeness* of the two teachers.

“You can switch from Good to Evil?” Beatrix asked repulsed.

“But of course,” Lecter said, his head tilted curiously, “it is all about behaviour and the rules.”

His eyes darkened from the amber they had been at the start, towards a gleaming red that could not be mistaken for anything else but Evil. His skin darkened slightly and his eyes seemed to become more deep set and severe.
“It is all about the motive behind your actions,” he repeated, his voice silky-smooth in a way that was almost *creepy*, “say that me telling you this was because I wanted to cause as much chaos as I could for my own entertainment. That is inherently a very selfish motive which could be considered to be both ‘taking’ and ‘hurting’.”

He smiles a smile that registers as having too many and too sharp teeth, “even though it can help you, the motive behind it is considered without doubt as being Evil.”

“Say that we are telling you this because we want to make sure you survive and win your story, regardless of you being an Ever or a Never,” Graham said. His voice had turned almost *melodic*, his eyes a very shining blue, his hair an almost chestnut colour and straightened into waves and his very countenance something that would easily fit into the court of nobles. They finally could see how he could be a count, “What we told you can help you unmask an Evil entity, or help said Evil entity mask itself in a better, more cunning way. Regardless of who we help win, that would count as ‘helping’ and even ‘defending’, and therefore Good.”

“Or, say we have another motive,” his eyes darkened towards a stormy grey, his face became without expression and his voice without infliction but ominous in a way they could not quite understand, his hair darkened and became more curly, and his posture gained something threatening not unlike a large predator, “say we want to confuse you into attacking your own allies because you believe them to be something they are not. Say we want to bring something out of you that was deeply hidden, but too ugly…”

The count shot the Evers a significant look, before he turned towards the Nevers, “or too beautiful to fit what the majority of your soul identifies as.”

The two predators smirked at them with gleaming eyes and sharp fangs and most of the students – even the Nevers who were at least slightly used to dealing with the more *creepy* side of fairy tales – tried to make themselves as small as possible.

“Or we could just be teaching you because we like teaching,” Lecter stated with an elegant shrug as the fangs turned to teeth, eyes respectively lightened and darkened and they turned back to whatever they had been at the start of the class, “and neither of us really believes in Good or Evil.”

The bell rang, signalling the end of the class.

“Just remember,” the doctor called after them as they left the room more quickly than they normally would have, almost mirthfully, “Motive is everything!”
“And actions can lie,” the count finished.

End Notes

I wrote this while down with the flu, so if you see any mistakes feel free to let me know.

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